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ABSTRACT

Qualitative criticism is a method of understanding things, actions, and events within a social framework. It is a method of acquiring knowledge to guide decision making based on local knowledge and a synthesis of principles from criticism and qualitative research. The function of qualitative criticism is centered with Richard Rorty's theoretical framework of solidarity. The basic principles of criticism, qualitative research, and qualitative criticism are outlined. The contributions of qualitative criticism have been and will continue to be vital to the study of education. The distinction between qualitative criticism and qualitative research is in the intent and extent of the inquiry, but both share common assumptions with naturalistic inquiry. Qualitative criticism in education intends to describe, interpret, and evaluate instruction. Its functions are described in terms of the axioms of naturalistic inquiry defined by Y. Lincoln and E. Guba. The difference between criticism and qualitative criticism is in the emphasis on naturalistic inquiry. The larger framework of Rorty's concept of solidarity and the viewpoint of George Herbert Mead for understanding social interaction are described. The use of qualitative criticism in an educational study is illustrated through a preliminary study of teacher selection of instructional media that considered the preferences of junior high school students. A study of how teachers use qualitative criticism is in progress. One table contrasts positivist and naturalist axioms. (SLD)

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A Study Combining Criticism and Qualitative Research Techniques for Appraising Classroom Media

Division B; Division G - Cultural and Curriculum Studies Exchange
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A Study Combining Criticism and Qualitative Research Techniques for Appraising Classroom Media

Introduction

Qualitative criticism is not simply a technique for gathering data. It is a method of understanding things, actions, and events within a social framework. Qualitative criticism is a method of acquiring knowledge to guide decision making based on local knowledge. It is a synthesis of principles from criticism and qualitative research. To explain this synthesis, a short description of criticism will be followed by an explanation of assumptions and methods related to qualitative research and how these assumptions relate to qualitative criticism.

The function of qualitative criticism is centered within Richard Rorty's theoretical framework of solidarity. George Herbert Mead's description of a generalized other will be used to assist in understanding Rorty's notion of solidarity. I will attempt to sort through a distinction between moral questions and ethical questions and clarify how Rorty's form of pragmatism escapes relativism by focusing on cultural grounding for ethical behavior. By showing that Rorty's pragmatism is not relativistic but grounded in solidarity, I hope to demonstrate that the function of qualitative criticism is to assist in giving shape and cohesion to practice in contentious environments like schools.

The remainder of the discussion will deal with why qualitative criticism is important to the appraisal of classroom media.

Qualitative Criticism, A Description

It is important to know what qualitative criticism is and why it is, or is not, different from criticism or qualitative research. For example, is it reasonable to claim that qualitative criticism is not different from qualitative research because qualitative research requires criticism?

A Comparison

	Criticism	Qualitative Research	Qualitative Criticism
focus	object or event	entire context	object, event in context
credibility	experience of critic (connoisseurship)	experience of researcher prolonged engagement persistent engagement qualitative methods	experience of critic (connoisseurship) qualitative methods
elements	object or event critic	object or event critic (researcher) producer of the object or event those affected by the object or event context	object or event critic producer of the object or event those affected by the object or event context
function	criticism	research	qualitative criticism

The function of criticism seems to be the consideration of the object or event under inspection from the critic's viewpoint. The critic and his or her subject are the purposeful extent of criticism. It is not the function of criticism to extend beyond the critic and the subject of criticism. Qualitative research has its particular purposes too. Qualitative research is generally done to explore a phenomenon or answer some sort of question. It is research through compilation of non-statistical data. Much of what is put under the label of qualitative research deals with the entire context of a phenomenon or question. Context may be understood as the people, places, and situations (situations may be the tasks, goals, activities, hierarchies, etc., that people encounter in certain places). For qualitative researchers, trustworthy data about context requires prolonged and persistent engagement while studying a particular subject within a specific context. Prolonged engagement means observations, interviews, document collection and other types of data collection over an extended period of time spanning months, or even a year or more. Persistent engagement means pressing the inconsistencies that the researcher sees in the data at hand. All of this takes time. Time is a major factor separating qualitative research and qualitative criticism. The qualitative researcher is interested in amassing many different data types to support the existence of patterns in behavior to warrant his or her claim to "know" something about the topic under investigation. In contrast, a qualitative critic substitutes his or her connoisseurship and experience for prolonged and persistent engagement, and selects a specific event or object to criticize instead of collecting a large array of data over time. The qualitative critic utilizes many of the methods and assumptions of qualitative research. For example, the qualitative critic is interested in the context of the event, the intent of the producer, and the effect of the object or event upon other people in a specific context. In order to formulate

the criticism a qualitative critic uses observation, interviews, documents, member checks, etc. In this way, the qualitative critic is more like a qualitative researcher than a critic. What separates the qualitative critic and the qualitative researcher is the time and scope of their respective investigations. What separates critics from qualitative critics are the scope, intent, and techniques of their criticism.

The next sections explain the basic principles of criticism, qualitative research, and qualitative criticism more fully.

What is Criticism?

To better understand qualitative criticism it is illustrative to briefly describe the nature of criticism. It is important to note what the purpose and function of criticism is meant to be in order to understand differences between criticism and qualitative criticism. Dewey's (Ratner, 1939) ideas about criticism seem to have been reiterated in one form or another by many writers. For Dewey, criticism is judgment. The material out of which judgment grows is the work, the object, but it is this object as it enters into the experience of the critic by interaction with his/her own sensitivity, knowledge, and funded store from past experiences. As to their content, therefore, judgments will vary with concrete material that evokes them, and that must sustain them, if criticism is pertinent and valid. Nevertheless, judgments have a common form. These functions are discrimination and unification. Judgment has to evoke a clearer consciousness of constituent parts and to discover how consistently these parts are related to form a whole (Ratner, 1939).

Criticism is the sort of judgment which is greatly influenced by the past experiences of the judge, and criticism is judgment which involves analysis and synthesis. These aspects of Dewey's definition seem common to other thoughtful discussions of critics. For example, Elliot Eisner's (Eisner, 1985) notion of criticism seems to illustrate certain features in common with Dewey.

> Criticism is empirical in the significant sense that the qualities the critique describes or renders must be capable of being located in the subject matter of the criticism. In this sense, the test of criticism is in its instrumental effects on the perception of works of art. It is not abstraction that one understands through criticism but rather qualities and their relationships (p. 217).

In the quote above, Eisner directs us to consider the subject matter of criticism and to understand both qualities, constituent parts, and their relation to a presumed whole. Also, Eisner states that a "test of criticism is in its instrumental effects on the perception of works of art." One way of interpreting this last statement may be to suggest that criticism rests in experience and can change experience. This is somewhat similar to a statement made by Dewey (1958, p. 324) in Art as Experience. "The function of criticism is the reeducation of perception of works of art." Criticism of experience through attention to the work or object and through the use of analysis and synthesis appear to be common themes for both Dewey and Eisner.

Eisner (1985), in The Educational Imagination, calls the experience of the critic a crucial element of criticism: he calls that element connoisseurship.

> Effective criticism, within the arts or in education, is not an act independent of the powers of perception. The ability to see, to perceive what is subtle, complex, and important, is its first necessary condition. The act of knowledgeable perception is, in the arts, referred to as connoisseurship. To be a connoisseur is to know how to look, to see, and to appreciate. Connoisseurship, generally defined, is the art of appreciation. It is essential to criticism because without the ability to perceive what is subtle and important, criticism is likely to be superficial or even empty. The major distinction between connoisseurship and criticism is this: connoisseurship is the art of appreciation, criticism is the art of disclosure. Connoisseurship is a private act; it consists of recognizing and appreciating the qualities of a particular, but it does not require either a public statement or a public description of those qualities (p. 219).

Three aspects of criticism or public disclosure are descriptive, interpretative and evaluative statements (Eisner, 1985). McCutcheon (1979, 1982) has written about the application of critical description, interpretation, and evaluation in education. She states that "The aim of educational criticism is to characterize, interpret and appraise the nature of educational materials and settings and the nature of curriculum and instruction taking place" (McCutcheon, 1979, p. 5). Constant change could make the object of educational

criticism elusive; therefore, analysis and synthesis of curriculum might possibly become a more difficult task than analysis and synthesis of a finished piece of art or literature. Since education is a value intensive endeavor, the past experience of the judge may be of special importance to educational criticism. McCutcheon's (1979) awareness of the dynamic character of education and the importance of the critic's experience is reflected in the following statement: "The novelty of the setting is compared to what else the critic knows about classrooms and to past encounters with them" (McCutcheon, 1979, p. 7). "What the critic knows about classrooms" could be significant enough to be publicly disclosed for the reader's enlightenment. Educational criticism may require unusually rigorous and exacting methods (McCutcheon, 1979, 1982).

Some of the qualities of criticism mentioned by Dewey, Eisner, and McCutcheon are: criticism is judgment anchored to a work object or work to be studied; criticism is influenced by the experience of the judge; and criticism involves the analysis of constituent parts through synthesis to a unified whole.

What is Qualitative Criticism?

Qualitative criticism includes the three qualities of criticism mentioned above but adds one more. The additional quality is the values, knowledge, and experience of the creator of the thing or act being evaluated. The purpose of this addition is not to leap out of our own values, standards, and experience into the world of another person but rather to come to a better understanding of our own values, standards, and experience by seeing them more completely. An object of criticism is part of our world. The values, standards, and experience of the creator of the object or act being criticized are present in our world by virtue of the presence of the act or thing being criticized by us. In order to better understand the subject of criticism, it seems reasonable to inquire about the values, standards, and experience of the person who created it. How and why do we engage in qualitative criticism is the topic at hand. This section will explain assumptions related to qualitative criticism and methods for acquiring information.

Assumptions

The assumptions listed below are fundamental to gathering data for the purpose of qualitative criticism. They are taken from Naturalistic Inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These assumptions do not represent a rejection of statistical research but rather a set of

assumptions for qualitative criticism. The column labeled Positivist Paradigm is meant to represent statistical research. The column labeled Naturalist Paradigm is meant to represent naturalistic research. Naturalistic or qualitative research share common assumptions but they are different endeavors. It is probably accurate to claim that good naturalistic research includes criticism; however, the focus of qualitative criticism is not research but rather criticism. For example, the focus of qualitative research may be an extensive description of something over a period of time (prolonged engagement) while the focus of qualitative criticism could be a specific art object or educational act.

Table 1.1 Contrasting Positivist and Naturalist Axioms

Axioms About	Positivist Paradigm	Naturalist Paradigm
The nature of reality	Reality is single, tangible and fragmentable	Realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic
The relationship of knower to the known	Knower and known are independent, a dualism	Knower and known are interactive, inseparable
The possibility of generalization	Time and context-free generalization (nomothetic statements) are possible	Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses (ideographic statements) are possible
The possibility of causal linkages	There are real causes, temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects.	All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.
The role of values	Inquiry is value free	Inquiry is value-bound

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By drawing distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research I do not intend to diminish the importance or appropriateness of quantitative research. The contributions of quantitative research have been and will continue to be vital to the study of education. What I want to emphasize are the assumptions that underlie both qualitative research and qualitative criticism. The difference between qualitative criticism and qualitative research is both the intent and extent of the inquiry but both share common assumptions.

•Axiom one: Reality is seen as multiple, constructed, and holistic.

Qualitative criticism in education involves an inspection of a complex, subtle context. Let's take the case of a high school algebra class as an example. Test scores are fairly discrete measures of student achievement. It is easy to point to who achieved the highest score but what if the question was why did a certain student who scored well on a measure that predicts success in algebra do poorly on this test and subsequent tests. We

could also conduct a naturalistic research study to determine why some students who scored well on aptitude tests performed poorly in high school algebra courses. The purpose of the naturalistic research study might be to investigate non-discrete or non-measurable data about why students performed poorly. In addition to the test scores, we could interview students who scored poorly even though they scored well on an algebra aptitude test. We could interview the teacher, the student's parents and classmates. We could observe classroom instruction over a period of time focusing on teacher behaviors and on low-achieving high-aptitude student behaviors. The algebra teacher's lesson plans and handouts could be part of the data set as well as student note-taking. Student transcripts dating back to grade school might also be of interest. The goal of this research would be an extensive description of a question. Why do some high aptitude algebra students perform poorly in class? The investigation might involve the perspective of teachers, students, and parents, each of whom might construe or construct the problem of the algebra student problem in very different ways. In this example of a naturalistic research study, a picture of the question was derived from multiple viewpoints. An in-depth investigation might try to gain a holistic or comprehensive picture of why the students did not do well in high school algebra when they were predicted to do well. Words comprised the observational and interview data instead of numbers, and a description of the problem or question was the primary intent of the study.

While still in the same algebra classroom we could ask a third question. We could conduct a qualitative criticism of an algebra class. The question might be: does this instruction represent good practice? In fact, principals are asked to perform this task quite frequently. The focus of the qualitative criticism is one class session. The intent is to describe, interpret, and evaluate instruction taking place. The focus is narrow and specific and so is the intent of qualitative criticism. Three general considerations are relevant to the criticism. The first consideration is the values and standards of the critic, which McCutcheon suggests are important enough to be made public. A clear description and appraisal of the class session might include an account of teacher and student behavior and documents like handouts and homework. A third factor might be the values and standards of the teacher. For instance, the teacher could comment about his or her lesson plan before the class session, and give a personal account about how well he or she thought the class went after it was over. The critic's view, the event being criticized, and the teacher's view should be part of qualitative criticism. Students might also be interviewed for their perspective. As with the naturalistic study, multiple perspectives could be used. Each participant might construe or construct the class session

differently. The purpose of qualitative criticism is to gain a holistic picture of the event and appraise it.

•Axiom two: Knower and known are interactive, inseparable.

In naturalistic inquiry (also known as qualitative research, descriptive research, qualitative evaluation, etc.) the researcher is the instrument. He or she does the observing, interviewing and other data collection. Knower and known interact within the setting; hence, they are connected.

In qualitative criticism the critic is the sole describer, interpreter, and evaluator. His or her experience, knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes are crucial to the credibility of the qualitative criticism. Knower and known are even more interlaced in qualitative criticism because qualitative research usually is more extensive in scope and usually more guarded as a form of interpretation and evaluation. Qualitative criticism is written through the critic's lens. It is his or her description, interpretation, and evaluation of an object or act. It is a personal act of appraisal and a statement of community beliefs, as I hope to demonstrate later in the paper. Knower and known are one within a community of experience, knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes.

•Axiom three: Only time and context bound working hypotheses (ideographic statements) are possible.

Context may be described as the people, place, and situation under investigation. People and place are fairly obvious terms but situation may not be as clear. Situation refers to the hierarchy, activities, goals, tasks, etc., people are involved in at a particular time and place. Context is the stuff of qualitative criticism. The object or act being criticized, the designer of the object or the doer of the act, and the critic are all part of the qualitative criticism. The critic becomes part of the context and his or her criticism can be understood or judged in relation to the context. Qualitative criticism is a working hypothesis about the present state of a context.

•Axiom four: All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.

A quantitative researcher has the benefit of experimental design to control for internal and external threats to validity. The naturalistic researcher and qualitative critic do not have the benefit of a controlled environment because it is their task to describe and report an uncontrolled, subtle, and frequently contradictory context or setting. Social interaction within a given context may be so complex that causes and effects cannot be sorted out. In the example of the algebra student, a case study of several students might yield valuable information about why high-aptitude students perform poorly in an algebra course, but it would not be able to identify cause and effect relationships. Such a case study would describe a specific set of events, in a specific time, a specific place, and a specific situation. Many interacting factors would probably be occurring simultaneously in the lives of the algebra students. While it might be fair to say some factors or occurrences were significant, it would be impossible to control for unknown intervening occurrences which might fall outside of the investigation. It would be impossible to distinguish causes from effects. For the qualitative critic, an evaluation does not involve cause and effect. Instead, the appraisal requires a grounding in the act or object being criticized, and it requires the experience, knowledge, skills and attitudes of the critic and the criticized.

•Axiom five: Inquiry is value bound.

This is a rather obvious assumption for the qualitative critic. The criticism is bound to the values found within the context and to the experience, knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes of the critic.

Solidarity as a Framework for Qualitative Criticism

The intent of the short discussion of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) five axioms related to naturalistic inquiry was to illustrate the synthesis of criticism and naturalistic inquiry. Hopefully, good naturalistic inquiry contains some qualitative criticism, but qualitative criticism has its own scope and purpose. The difference between criticism and qualitative criticism is not merely the addition of the perspective of the doer/designer/producer of the thing or act being criticized, but more importantly the five axioms or assumptions of

naturalistic inquiry are emphasized in qualitative criticism. These five axioms point toward a larger framework which extends the notion of qualitative criticism. This larger framework for qualitative criticism indicates a social underpinning and role. In brief, that role is to give shape and cohesion to practice in contentious environments like schools by providing an exchange between the critic and his or her context. The larger framework is Richard Rorty's concept of solidarity.

George Herbert Mead's framework for understanding social interaction may relate to an understanding of solidarity. The expectation that this unique viewpoint concerning social interaction may aid in studying solidarity is the point of the following short section about Mead's ideas.

George Herbert Mead was committed to a social idea of self. For him, the social act was the unit of social existence. It consisted of stimulus, manipulation, and response (Miller, 1973). Manipulation was the focus of an act. For Mead, manipulation was what makes us human. Manipulation meant to rehearse action in terms of an anticipated response of others before engaging in an act. This rehearsal included three tenses: the past, present and future. The past represented our reservoir of experience which was the product of tradition or a generalized other, the present was the present context or circumstance, and the future was the anticipated response of some person or persons to our action.

Manipulation was how a concept of self was formed. According to Mead, by rehearsing the reaction of other people to our own actions we form a concept of self. In order to understand manipulation more clearly, some other terms should probably be introduced and explained. Among them, "experience" and "adjustment" might contribute to clarifying how Mead viewed the formation of self. "The environment of living organisms is constantly changing, it is constantly invaded with other and different things. The assimilation of what occurs and that which recurs with what is elapsing and what has elapsed is called experience" (Miller, 1973, p. 37). This is a process of taking what occurs via the senses into a system of awareness about what is happening and remembrances about what has happened.

The validity of what occurs depends on practical outcomes in terms of adjustment. "The process of adjustment is therefore a case in which items in the old system must adjust to the emergent and it to them, and the adjustment has definite implications for the future" (Miller, 1973, p. 23). Mead's notion of the social act is grounded in experience. The

most primitive sort of experience is the nonsocial act. "A nonsocial act is an ongoing event that consists of stimulation and response and the results of that response" (Miller, 1973, p. 31). The response leads to some sort of adjustment. In contrast, during the social act there is a manipulatory phase that might be referred to as reflexiveness. "By reflexiveness Mead meant, '. . . the turning-back of experience of the individual upon himself . . .'" (Franklin, 1975, p. 6). During the social act there is a manipulatory phase in which incoming stimuli are subjected to reflexiveness before consummation (response) occurs. The manipulatory phase is the social phase because objects or symbols are "reflected upon" in terms of a social perspective. "A perspective, then, requires the selection of that which is necessary for the adjustment of the organism, an adjustment made by completing the act" (Miller, 1973, p. 32). Social acts seem to require a shared perspective for adjustment. Shared perspective may be understood through the following:

> Taking the role of another happens when the individual is able to evoke in himself by his own behavior (gesture) the same response (a functionally identical response) that his behavior evokes in another. . . . The role which is shared by the other is the role manipulation fundamentally in that all shared experiences derive from it (Miller, 1973, pp. 33-34).

Thus, individuals look at their own response in terms of a perspective shared by others. They manipulate objects and symbols by internalization of the knowledge of the community. The connection between language and the development of self is direct. "Communication is a relationship between one part of the social act, the gesture, and the response of adjustment by a second form to that gesture" (Miller, 1973, p. 47). A gesture is part of a social act which requires manipulation by another. "Language gestures are the means by which functionally identical responses are evoked in both the speaker and the other to whom the gesture is addressed" (Miller, 1973, p. 48). Communication through language is a method of development of self for individuals and the common community in which individuals participate. Common or shared attitudes may be formed through this process. An attitude is defined as "a readiness to respond in a certain way when a particular that will fulfill or aid in completing the act is present" (Miller, 1973, p. 82). ("Particular" refers to a specific object or symbol belonging to a class that elicits a functionally similar response as it would from other members of the same class.) "The

organized set of attitudes, and their corresponding responses which are common to the group, is the generalized other" (Miller, 1973, p. 49). It is the generalized other as the self views it. The generalized other appears to be the shared moral which the community carries in its traditions (Miller, 1973). Duality of generalized other and self seems to be a constant, interlocking, mutually formative process. The duality can be seen in Mead's comments about self (Franklin, 1975).

> The fully developed self for Mead had two phases, which he called the "I" and the "me." The "me" represented the attitudes called for by the generalized other, that is, society. The "I" constituted the response of the individual to these attitudes. "I" then represented the individual's particular and unique identity within social life. As such, self for Mead was not a physical object, such as the brain or the body. The self was reflexive, which an object, such as the body was not (p. 6).

Mead's notions about the formation of self through symbolic interaction with a generalized other are important for several reasons. First, symbolic interaction outlines a specific version of how an individual is related to community-based knowledge. Although my presentation of Mead's theory of symbolic interaction is adumbrated, enough elements may be present for the reader to comprehend that a relationship exists between the formation of an individual self and a larger knowledge consisting of shared perspectives and attitudes related to social activity. Within the parameters of Mead's ideas, knowledge might be construed to mean a shared framework of ideas about words, objects and other symbols which inform the social act. Knowledge may be dependent on the shared perspectives, attitudes and communication that the individual perceives as a generalized other. A generalized other may be understood to be "the organized set of attitudes and their corresponding responses which are common to the group" (Miller, 1973, p. 49). The size of the group may be as small as a family or as large as the social acts of the group extend. Group-based knowledge may be understood, in Mead's terms, as symbolic; therefore, a shared framework of ideas about words, objects and other symbols which inform social acts seems to be a conception of knowledge appropriate to this viewpoint.

Mead's description of a generalized other or normative community is one of the ideas that lies at the center of pragmatism. Since Rorty refers to pragmatism, Mead's explanation seemed particularly appropriate. You can for practical purposes substitute the concept of a generalized other for solidarity. I offer the following series of quotes from part one of Rorty's (1991) Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth to describe solidarity and pragmatism.

> There are two principle ways in which reflective human beings try, by placing their lives in a larger context, to give sense to those lives. The first is by telling the story of their contribution to a community (page 21).

Rorty might have included that a person could define himself by how the community has contributed to him. For Rorty, there is a mutual shaping between community (solidarity) and individuals.

In his rejection of the relativist label, Rorty discusses the ethical nature of truth that is based in cultural ethnocentricity. It originates from the type of exchange that Mead described as "manipulation."

> "Relativism" is the traditional epithet applied to pragmatism by realists. Three different views are commonly referred to by this name. The first is the view that every belief is as good as every other. The second is the view that "true" is an equivocal term, having as many meanings as there are procedures of justification. The third is the view that there is nothing to be said about either truth or rationality apart from description of the familiar procedures of justification. The third is the view that there is nothing to be said about either truth or rationality apart from description of the familiar procedures of justification which a given society - *ours* - uses in one or another area of inquiry. The pragmatist holds the ethnocentric third view. But he does not hold the self-refuting first view, nor the eccentric second view. He thinks that his views are better than the realists, but he does not think that his views correspond to the nature of things. He thinks that the very

> flexibility of the word "true" - the fact that it is merely an expression of commendation - insures its univocity. The term "true" on his account, means the same in all cultures, just equally flexible terms like "here" "there," "good," "bad," "you," and "me" mean the same in all cultures. But the identity of meaning is, of course, compatible with diversity of reference, and with diversity of procedures for assigning the terms (page 23).

In the next two quotes, I believe Rorty draws a line between moral questions and ethical questions. He seems to see a relationship between community definition through cooperative human inquiry and ethical definitions of right and wrong. It is through ethical behavior that we define our community. This is the role I believe qualitative criticism plays within the educational sector of solidarity. The function of honoring our own solidarity occurs through cooperative human inquiry like qualitative criticism.

> But the pragmatist does not have a theory of truth, much less a relativistic one. As a partisan of solidarity, his account of the value of cooperative human inquiry has only an ethical base, not an epistemological or metaphysical one (page 24).

> Either we attach a special privilege to our own community, or we pretend an impossible tolerance for every other group.

> I have been arguing that we pragmatists should grasp the ethnocentric horn of this dilemma. We should say that we must, in practice, privilege our own group, even though there can be noncircular justification for doing so. We must insist that the fact that nothing is immune from criticism does not mean that we have a duty to justify everything. We Western liberal intellectuals should accept the fact that we have to start from where we are, and that his means that there are lots of views which we simply cannot take seriously (page 29).

Fuzziness, as it is defined in the next quote, refers to establishing community standards through unforced agreement like an exchange of qualitative criticisms. Through such exchanges we can become aware of who we are as a community.

> What I am calling "pragmatism" might also be called "left-wing Kuhnianism." It has been also rather endearingly called (by one of its critics, Clark Glymour) the "new fuzziness," because it is an attempt to blur just those distinctions between the objective and the subjective and between fact and value which the critical conception of rationality has developed. We fuzzies would like to substitute the idea of "unforced agreement" for that of "objectivity" (page 38).

In this final quotation, Rorty describes his utopia of reciprocal loyalty. He sees the preservation and self-improvement of community as essential to its survival. Qualitative criticism is an attempt to describe how Rorty's community might work. Qualitative criticism is an exchange within the community that expresses individual and community standards by including multiples perspectives of community standards through individuals experienced with a multifaceted generalized other or solidarity.

> In this heyday of the fuzzy, there would be as little reason to be self-conscious about the nature and status of one's discipline as, in the ideal democratic community, about the nature and status of one's race or sex. For one's ultimate loyalty would be to the larger community which permitted and encouraged this kind of freedom and insouciance. This community would have no higher end than its own preservation and self-improvement, the preservation and enhancement of civilization. It would identify rationality with that effort, rather than with the desire for objectivity. So it would feel no need for a foundation more solid than reciprocal loyalty (page 45).

How Does Qualitative Criticism Relate to the Appraisal of Classroom Media?

My primary intent for writing this paper has evolved. I have become more interested in explaining the idea of qualitative criticism than making a report on recent research. The idea for qualitative criticism came from a recent qualitative research project. The idea for qualitative criticism came from wonderful research informants in a school setting who were willing to give their time and insights to the project.

Last year I conducted a study at a Junior High School in a Northwest Arkansas suburban community. The focus of the study was to understand how teachers select media for instruction. Instead of focusing on the data I began to realize, with a new perspective, that things I mentioned about the data I had collected for the project made a difference. When I share this data with teachers, they began to change their behavior. One example was when I was talking with a seventh grade science teacher about what his seventh grade students said about their preferences for models during my interviews with them. It seems that this particular group of seventh grade students preferred models of the human circulatory system and other biological systems like the muscular system over multimedia (CD-ROM or interactive video disc), because they could manipulate the parts and see how they were physically related. This seems to make sense in terms of the work of Jean Piaget and in terms of Dale's cone of experience. Both authors discuss learning and media in terms of abstract and concrete experience (Heinich, Molenda, and Russel, 1993). It seems reasonable that seventh graders might prefer learning through a concrete medium like models. Fewer of the eighth grade students I interviewed expressed a predisposition for models, and none of the ninth grade students mentioned models as their most preferred instructional medium. The seventh grade science teacher was very surprised to hear his students wanted to use models rather than computers with multi media software, but quickly began to reevaluate his position. He stated that in the future he would purchase more models for his students to use. This change in the teacher's behavior started me thinking about the ideas that I have outlined about qualitative criticism. What if teachers were to begin to use a sort of criticism which would capitalize on their experience as teachers to evaluate, among other things, their own selection of media for classroom use. I had hoped to begin a research study about qualitative criticism immediately, but began to realize that I had not fully explored the theoretical and practical implications of what I was about to study.

At first I thought criticism might be a likely methodology to employ, but criticism didn't seem the right tool for probing beyond personal experience. I thought about qualitative research but qualitative research required a great deal of time and preparation. Action research seemed to be a likely model but seemed to depend heavily on an experienced facilitator for success and appeared to require quite a bit of time to complete a study. I thought a more private, time-efficient model for teachers to use to investigate their own practice might be more appropriate. It seemed that a combination of qualitative research and criticism might help teachers move beyond their own experience while honoring the value of their classroom experience. In addition, qualitative criticism could focus on a particular event or object like an investigation of how a certain group of students learned from a particular type of media.

The incident with models started me thinking about how willing teachers are to learn new information about their own teaching. It has taken a while to delineate what qualitative criticism might be and how it might function. The study about how teachers use qualitative criticism is in progress. The origins are from qualitative research and qualitative research is currently being used to refine the process. What seems to be in place is a conceptual framework for doing qualitative criticism.

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